

Compassion's Place In Our Work

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So what *is* mindfulness?

“Mindfulness means **paying attention in a particular way**, on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally.”

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness Meditation

- ❑ Take a mindful posture.
- ❑ Awareness of the sensations of breathing.
- ❑ Notice (non-judgmentally) when your mind goes somewhere else.
- ❑ Return to the sensations of breathing.

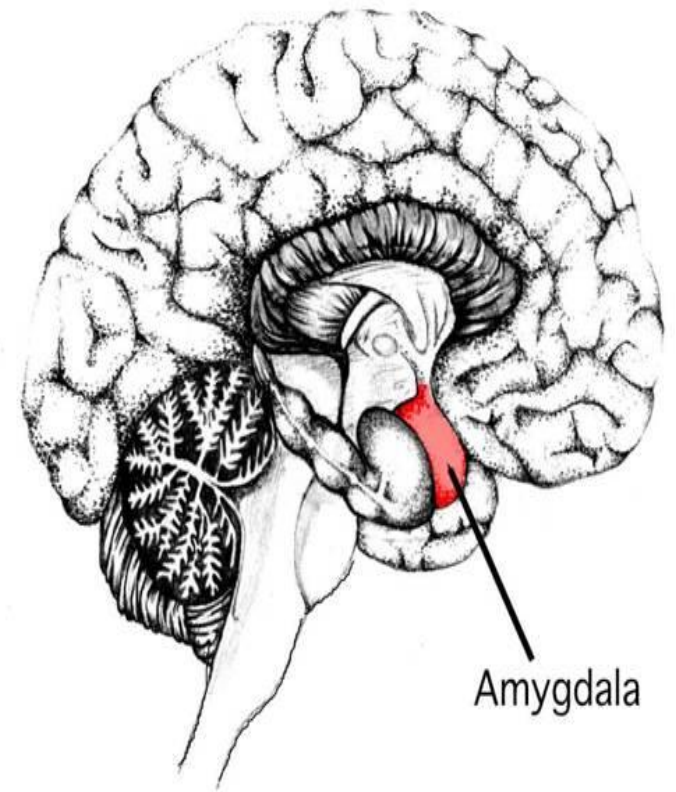


Amygdala

“Fight or Flight.” Stress response, alerts us of danger (real or perceived).

Many problems associated with an overactive amygdala.

Mindfulness practice is associated with decreased gray matter in this area, and inactivity during meditation.

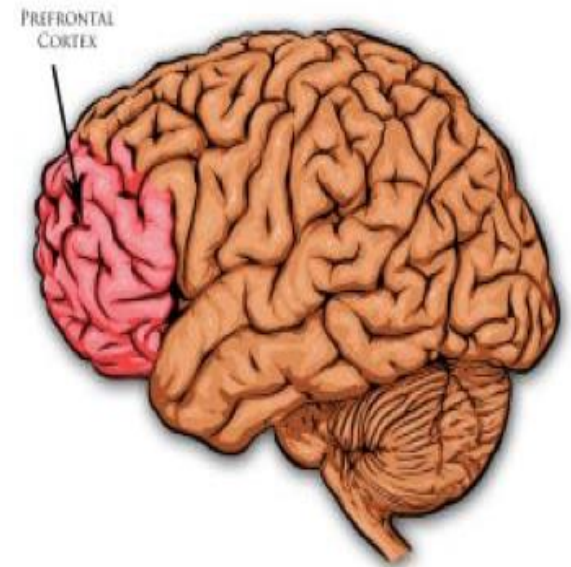


Prefrontal Cortex

Executive functions: decision making, planning, abstract thinking, emotion regulation, and moderating social behavior.

Mindfulness practice is associated with increased size and activation of the PFC.

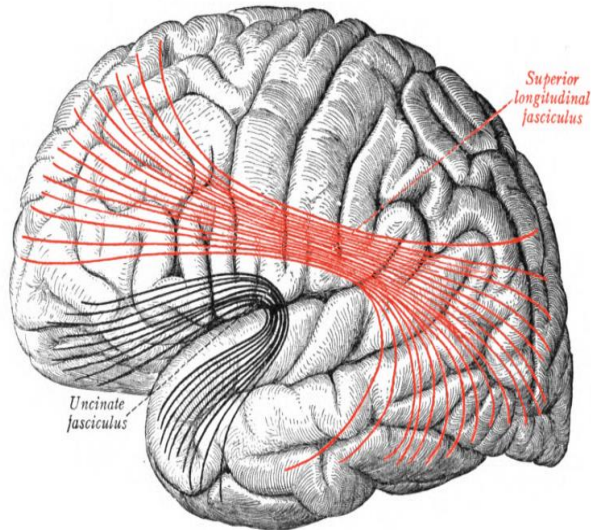
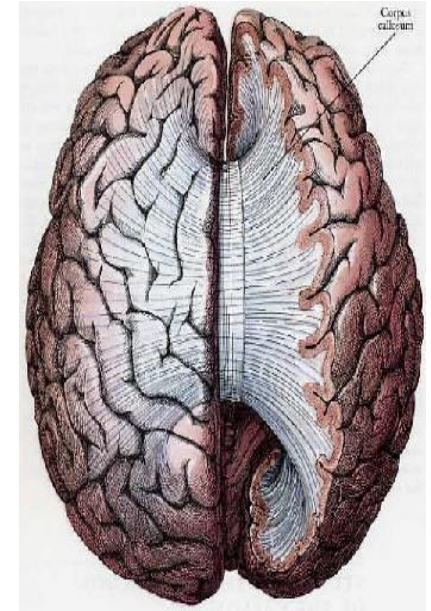
The PFC shrinks as we age.



Study found that the 50 year old meditators had the same amount of cortex as 25 year olds. Mindfulness may slow down the age related decline in cortical structure.

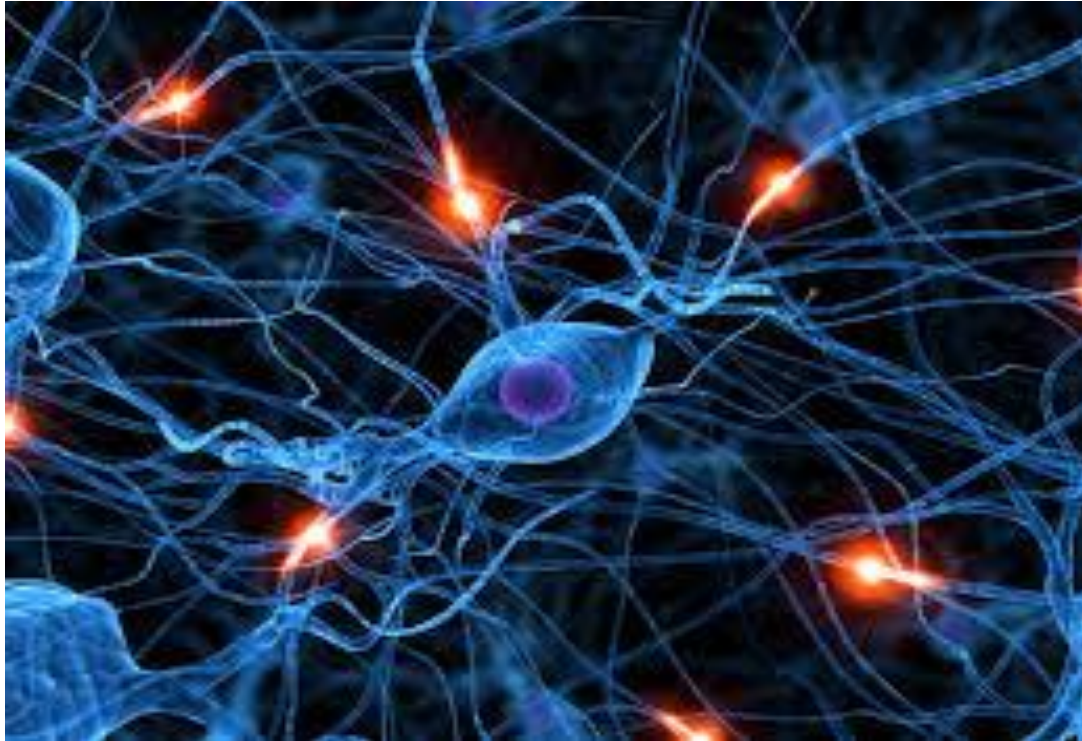
Changes in White Matter Pathways

Corpus Callosum: connects the two hemispheres of the brain. Facilitates “communication”.



Superior Longitudinal Fasciculus: a pair of long bi-directional bundles of neurons connecting the front and back of the cerebrum.

Neuroplasticity



Ability of the brain to reorganize itself through behavior and experience.

Mindful Meditation Research

- Three Types:
 - Focused Attention- focus on the breath or a particular object or visualization
 - Open Presence- Your mind is a big space with thoughts floating in and out.
 - Compassion
 - Compassion for self, for others, and for all sentient beings

Compassion Meditation

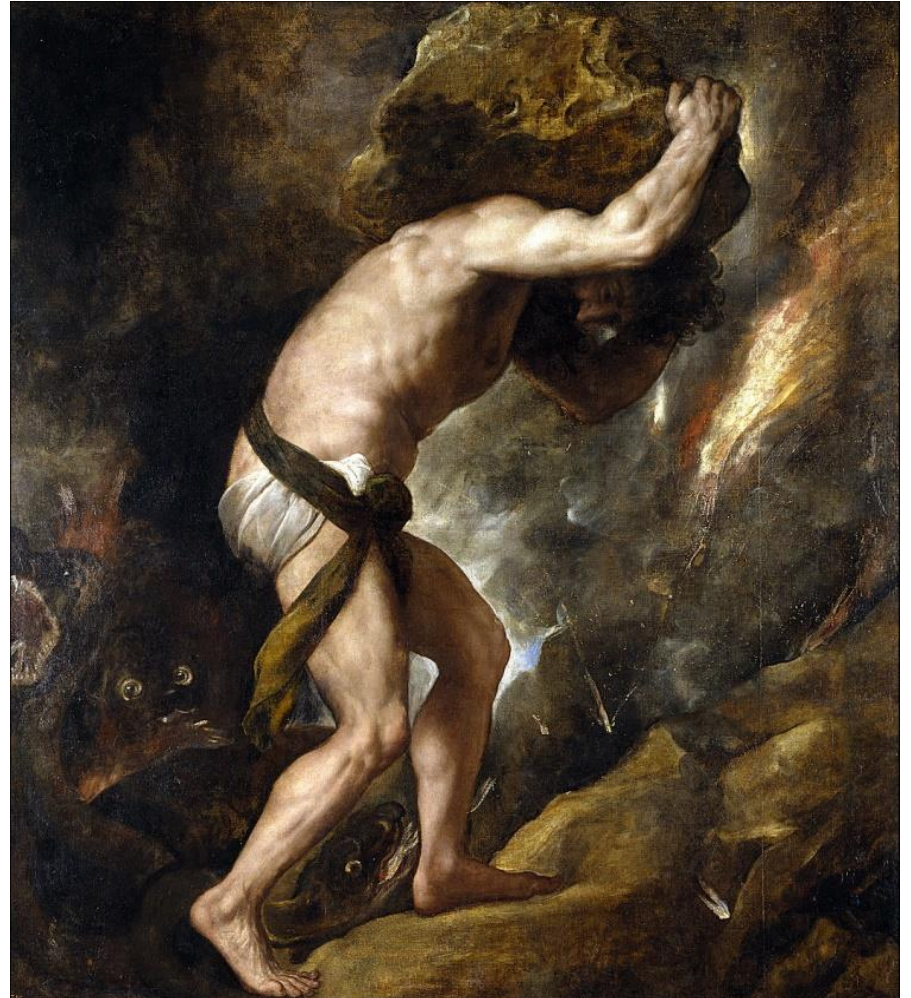
- Sometimes called loving kindness or Tonglen
- Results in dramatic brain wave activity and stimulates the parts of the brain that reduce overall stress and make us feel good.

Empathy vs. Compassion

- Empathy is experiencing another's emotion
 - Standing in the shoes of another
- Compassion is a sense of concern that arises when we are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to see that suffering relieved

Dalai Lama on Compassion

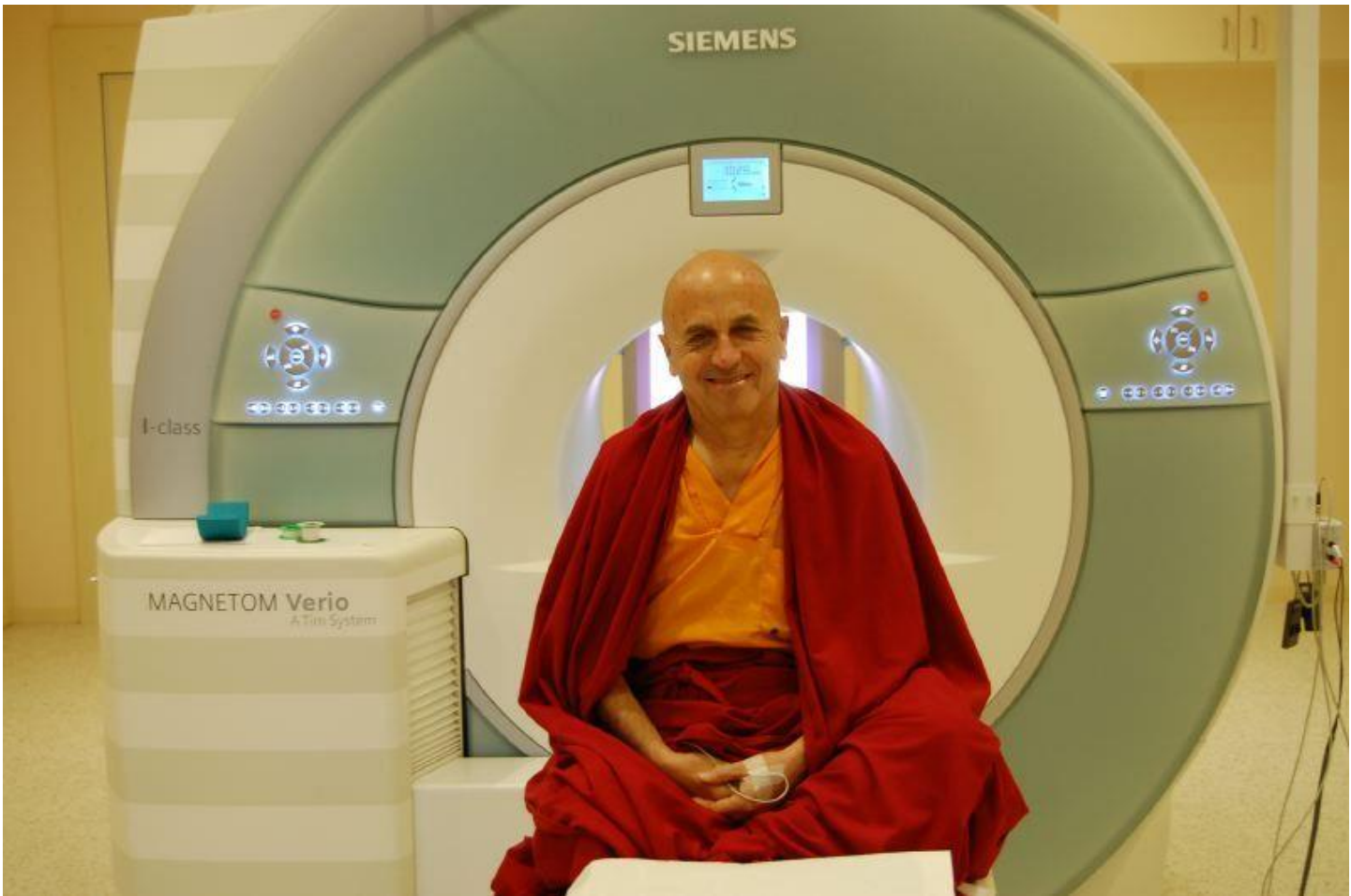
- “If we see a person being crushed by a rock, the goal is not to get under the rock and feel what they are feeling; it is to help remove the rock.”



I Think We Get Stuck Under the Rock

- The lives of our clients are often heartbreaking
- We sometimes feel paralyzed by the seriousness of their situation
- We become resigned to painful outcomes
- Combined with these other factors our caseloads can be overwhelming
- Over time we fail to connect to our clients because we are beat down

Matthieu Richard aka “The Happiest Man In the World”



Only Empathy Gets Fatigued, Not Compassion

- Empathic resonance with pain can lead, when it is repeated many times, to emotional exhaustion and distress and burnout.
- Burnout affects people confronted daily with others' sufferings, especially health care professionals and social workers.
- Analysis confirmed that the cerebral networks activated by meditation on compassion were very different from those linked to empathy
- Far from leading to distress and discouragement, compassion meditation reinforces our strength of mind, our inner balance, and our courageous, loving determination to help those who suffer.
- Love and compassion do not get exhausted and do not make us weary or worn out, but on the contrary help us surmount fatigue and rectify it, when it occurs.

Thupten Jinpa

- “Compassion requires us to pay attention and engage with other people’s troubles and suffering when it might be easier to ignore them or to otherwise make do with the status quo. It takes courage to open ourselves up to others, whether in asking or offering help. People who are suffering are not always on their best behavior!”



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Why Mindfulness? Why Compassion?

- Shantideva, the eighth-century Indian Buddhist author offers an analogy:

“If we were to try to cover the entire face of the earth with leather to protect our feet, where could we find enough leather? “



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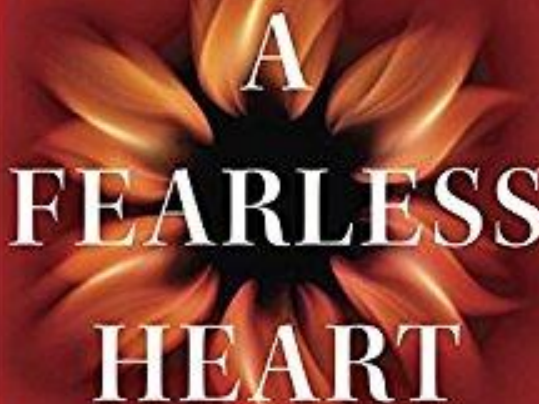
The Book of
JOY

His Holiness the
DALAI LAMA
Archbishop
DESMOND TUTU
with
DOUGLAS ABRAMS



THUPTEN JINPA, PhD

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"Not only demonstrates the power of compassion but also reveals how kindness and self-compassion are within our reach."
—KELLY MCGONIGAL, PhD, author of *The Upside of Stress*



**A
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HEART**

How the Courage to
Be Compassionate Can
Transform Our Lives

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